

all need to keep the CCP's authoritarian designs in check. I applaud the administration for taking this important step.

#### BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. President, on the CR, the omni, and NDAA, last night, the House of Representatives passed a 1-week continuing resolution that will keep the government open long enough for us to pass a bipartisan yearlong omnibus. Negotiations keep trending in the right direction, but we still have a lot of work left to do and not enough time to do it unless we extend government funding for another week.

Let me put it a different way. As of this morning, the Senate will now require consent from both parties if we want to pass a CR before funding runs out tomorrow at midnight. We should move quickly to avert a shutdown today, without any unwelcome brouhaha that has caused shutdowns in years past.

Democrats are ready together at a moment's notice, and I hope Republicans will stand ready too. Both sides are going to spend a day to work on an agreement to get the week-long CR done. We should have no drama, no gridlock, and no delay on passing a weeklong CR.

Just remember, those who demand something happen and risk shutting down the government almost always lose. Let me say that again: No drama, no gridlock, no delay. That is the recipe right now for avoiding a shutdown within the next 48 hours. I am very hopeful we will get that done with time to spare. For the last 2 years, the 117th Congress hasn't had a single government shutdown, not one, not even for a day. I hope we don't start now just as we approach the finish line. Recent history shows that those who risk shutdowns with hopes of scoring political points ultimately lose in the end.

Once we pass the CR, we can make progress toward an omnibus. I have said it time and time again, a yearlong omnibus is the best and most balanced option to fund our government. An omnibus is the best approach because it will ensure that our kids, our veterans, our small businesses, and our military continue to have full access to vital services and programs they depend on. An omnibus is the most balanced approach because it would contain priorities both sides want to see: funding for Ukraine; the ECA, Electoral Count Act; and full implementation of CHIPS and Science; the PACT Act; and more. We worked so hard together on these bills. Let's now work together again to implement them fully.

As we continue negotiating to pass a 1-week CR and an omni, both sides will keep working on an agreement to pass the NDAA, hopefully, today. We are trying to do it as soon as today. The NDAA has been a consistently bipartisan effort for every year for more than six decades. I do not expect this year to be any different, and I thank Chairman REED and all my colleagues for their good work on this bill.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Republican Leader is recognized.

#### NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. All year, Senate Republicans have urged Democrats to prioritize two basic governing duties, two tasks that are essential to keeping America safe, keeping us on track to remain the world's superpower, and doing right by our men and women in uniform.

No. 1 is the annual Defense bill, where we authorize the investments, tools, and training that our commanders, leaders, and servicemembers need.

No. 2 is passing government funding, where we back up the NDAA's ambitions with the actual dollars and cents that turn plans into reality.

Bipartisan negotiators are still working on the second item. I hope they are able to produce text of a bipartisan government funding bill that can pass the Senate before our hard deadline next Thursday. Otherwise, I will support pivoting next week to a short-term continuing resolution into the new year.

But I am glad that, in the very near future, the Senate will finally fulfill the first key duty and pass a strong NDAA named for our retiring ranking member, Senator INHOFE.

I have spent all week discussing ways this legislation will help our Armed Forces and national security professionals, safeguard our homeland, bolster our partnerships, and keep adversaries like Russia on their back feet. Today, I want to focus on what most Senators agree is the single greatest medium-term and long-term national security challenge that our Nation faces, and that is the Chinese Communist Party.

The legislation we will pass today includes provisions to extend our security assistance to Taiwan. It steps up our investments and capabilities that are essentially crucial to operations in the Indo-Pacific, from space assets to naval mines.

It reprioritizes countering China's nuclear breakout by curbing the Biden administration's naive efforts to retire critical elements of our nuclear arsenal.

It tightens security on our cutting-edge research and bolsters sea-launch strategic deterrent capabilities.

And that is not all.

This strong bipartisan bill puts new weight behind our long-term commitments to stand with both vulnerable countries in China's orbit and vulnerable people actually within its own borders.

It will authorize a new Joint Force Headquarters right there in the region and make sure that U.S. military installations are not commercial destinations for goods that have been produced with Uighur slave labor in the Xinjiang Province.

This bill will also help stiffen the spine of the liberal entertainment industry that apparently lacks the courage to cross Beijing without clearer incentives. This year's NDAA will prohibit the use of U.S. military assets, like ships or bases, in movies where the producers then turn around and allow Chinese censors to have final signoff. If Hollywood wants to trample on American principles of free expression in order to please the Communist Party, they won't get to use our Armed Forces as props in the process.

Of course, stepping up our competition with China and limiting the risks to America from the CCP does not mean walking away from the world stage more broadly—quite the contrary. Checking the CCP will take a coordinated effort with even stronger, deeper ties between the United States and our like-minded friends and partners.

That means everything from basing access to joint exercises and operations, to strengthening our own defense industrial base so that we can continue to score win-wins, in both security and economic terms, by selling our partners the defensive capabilities they need.

Protecting America and winning the future does not entail pulling up our drawbridge, turning inward, and pretending the world will leave us alone.

China is actively—actively—trying to undercut American interests and partnerships everywhere from Asia itself to the Middle East, to Africa and beyond.

This NDAA will strengthen our hand. It prioritizes crucial partnerships in the Indo-Pacific. It adds New Zealand to the National Technological Industrial Base. It expands our ability to share cyber capabilities with operational partners, and it preserves vital security cooperation efforts in the Middle East and invests in expanding partnerships in Africa, South America, and beyond.

The NDAA is only a first step toward the investments, modernization, and stronger strategies that we need to compete and to win against rivals who don't wish us well. But it is a crucial first step.

Therefore, I encourage every Senator on both sides to support this important legislation.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

## TRIBUTE TO RICHARD C. SHELBY

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, yesterday afternoon, RICHARD SHELBY delivered his farewell address here in the U.S. Senate.

It is difficult to think of the Senate without some of our retiring Members; it is nearly impossible to think of it without RICHARD SHELBY.

Like JIM INHOFE, he is a Senate institution. He has proudly served the State of Alabama for six terms in the Senate. That is 36 years of tireless work to make life better for the people of Alabama and for the American people as a whole.

He is currently the longest serving Senator in Alabama's history, as well as the longest serving Member in the history of the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

Throughout his Senate career, RICHARD has always kept his eye on getting things done for the people of Alabama, whether that is supporting Alabama military installations or the work NASA does in his State. He is a longtime NASA advocate, and as chairman and ranking member of the Subcommittee on Defense at the Senate Appropriations Committee, he has worked to ensure robust funding for our national security priorities.

He has also been a champion of funding to support Ukraine in its fight for freedom.

He has been a supporter of scientific research at various government Agencies, as well as in partnership with research universities.

RICHARD is also notable for being one of the tallest United States Senators. And that is significant to me because, as a tall guy myself, I don't often run into people I can look up to, but I look up to RICHARD, both literally and figuratively.

RICHARD's record of service and his dedication to people of his State are an inspiration to me and to many others as we carry out our work here in the U.S. Senate.

And I will miss his presence and his example as well as his sense of humor, which has lightened the mood around here on many challenging days.

But if anyone has earned his retirement, it is RICHARD SHELBY. And I wish him and Annette, his wife of 62 years, some very well-deserved relaxation and the very best of everything in the years ahead.

## TRIBUTE TO PATRICK J. TOOMEY

Mr. President, later today, Senator PAT TOOMEY, my longtime time colleague on the Senate Finance Committee, will deliver his farewell remarks.

PAT is known for, among other things, his steadfast commitment to pro-market policies—to fiscal responsibility, pro-growth tax policy, free trade, limited but efficient regulation—and, above all, for his command of these issues.

He has a tremendous grasp of finance, banking, and the economy and an equally tremendous understanding

of what the ins and outs of the Tax Code mean for business, saving and investment, and entrepreneurship.

And he is able to break down these oftentimes Byzantine subjects and explain them in plain language. And that, around here, is a gift.

These attributes made PAT the indispensable man during tax reform 5 years ago. His expertise and commitment were key to passage of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act—the wide-ranging reform of our Tax Code to put more money in American families' pockets and made American businesses more competitive.

Beyond tax policy, PAT has consistently fought protectionism in its many forms.

He has pushed back on financial market regulations that restrict fair competition, and he has fiercely advocated for market-opening initiatives that benefit Pennsylvania families, workers, and businesses.

He is going to be missed in the Senate—and on the Senate Finance Committee in particular—for his knowledge and his experience and for his practical approach to getting things done for the American people.

I admire PAT for his economic expertise, but I especially admire him for his thoughtfulness, his decency, and the fact that he is very principled.

He stayed committed to the causes he believes in, from improving economic opportunity for American families to reducing government waste to protecting taxpayer dollars.

And while I don't know what he will do next, I am confident that whatever he does will continue his commitment to building an economy that works for the American people.

I want to wish PAT and his wife, Kris, the very best on his retirement. I hope they are able to enjoy some well-deserved rest in the coming months, and I look forward to seeing all that PAT will do in the future.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LEE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOKER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

## COVID VACCINE

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, Winston Churchill said:

We sleep safely at night because rough men stand ready to visit violence on those who would harm us.

The men and women of the U.S. Armed Forces sign up for no small task. They join to serve their country; not for money, not for fame, not because it is glamorous in any way. They sign up because they understand that Winston Churchill was right—that the blessings of a free society are possible only if there are those willing to put the safety and well-being of their coun-

try ahead of their own safety and ahead of their own lives when necessary.

That solemn, sacred responsibility, the responsibility that every member of our Armed Forces has committed so nobly to upholding, deserves our utmost respect.

Regrettably, on August 9 of 2021, the Secretary of Defense issued a message to the force indicating his intent to require COVID-19 vaccination for all servicemembers. This mandate went into effect on August 24, 2021.

There were a lot of promises made at the time—promises suggesting that individual needs would be taken into account; individual needs including good faith, sincerely held religious beliefs that might make it impossible for a servicemember to be vaccinated without violating his or her sincerely held convictions.

Unfortunately, it hasn't really panned out that way, as I will explain in a moment.

But in a nutshell, since the implementation of this vaccine mandate over almost the last year and a half, the United States military has dismissed 8,200 servicemembers for declining to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

That is over 8,000—more than 8,200—individuals, and it is not just the individuals themselves. Many, if not most, of these individuals themselves are mothers or fathers. They have got mouths to feed, families to care for—all of whom are placed in a really unfair position as a result of this mandate. Serving our country shouldn't require you to surrender your fundamental right to make medical decisions that are right for you, no matter the reason, and yet that is precisely what the Department of Defense continues to do.

My office has received hundreds of accounts from brave members of our Armed Forces detailing the hardships and the retaliation they have experienced for declining to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. One first sergeant in the Air Force writes:

I was involuntarily separated and my enlistment was curtailed. I was a First Sergeant with the U.S. Air Force Reserves at the time the COVID mandate was put into place. I did everything I could to be allowed to continue to serve my country. I filed my Religious AR, and when it got denied, I also filed an appeal, and that got denied.

She goes on:

All I wanted to do was to continue to take care of the members of my squadron and continue to serve this great country.

Likewise, a Marine officer writes:

My family was forced to move on very short notice back to the U.S. from Okinawa, Japan due to the loss of a job and the threat of travel restriction if we remained unvaccinated. . . . Many are far worse off than me.

Another lieutenant colonel with the Marine Corps Reserve was placed on "inactive status" with "no warning or notice that this would happen" and in the process lost TRICARE health insurance that his family relies on to